



# CALIFORNIA STATE ARCHIVES

## ELECTRONIC RECORDS DAY 10.10.2021

### PERSONAL DIGITAL ARCHIVES

Electronic files are much more fragile than paper records, and their long-term survival requires attention and planning. These tips can help you better preserve your personal digital collections.

- 01** Focus your efforts on documents with long-term legal, financial, or sentimental value. For example, resumes, school papers, financial spreadsheets, tax returns, letters, photographs, and family histories.
- 02** Organize your photographs as you create them. It is much harder to identify thousands of images as time passes. Photo management software can help, but make sure you can understand your photos without it.
- 03** Print out your most critical files to protect them against loss. Doing so increases the chances that your documents and images will remain accessible and allows you to focus on backing up and copying/migrating files that cannot easily be printed out (e.g. databases, video files).
- 04** Organize your files by giving individual documents descriptive file names. Creating a directory/folder structure on your computer will help you organize your files. Write a brief description of the directory structure and the documents for future reference. Remember that someone else may need to make sense of them in the future.
- 05** Create multiple copies of the files and manage them in different places. Doing so will keep your information safe even if your computer crashes or another disaster. Use automatic backup programs (either cloud or local) to ease the burden.
- 06** Storage media have limited life spans, so you can't just file and forget. Make sure to check your files at least once a year to ensure they are still readable. Convert important files to a universal output format such as plain text (.txt), Rich Text Format (.rtf), or PDF/A. Save master copies of important digital images as TIFF (.tif) and create JPEG (.jpg) copies to share or post online. Keep track of the formats and media you use, so you are prepared to move the files forward as computer systems change.